



**Rachel Carson Reserve  
Local Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, November 08, 2016, 4p-6p**

**Attendance**

<b><u>LAC Partner Organization Members</u></b>	<b><u>Present</u></b>
Town of Beaufort Administration, Charlie Burgess	No
Town of Beaufort Police Department, Chief Paul Burdette	Yes
North Carolina Maritime Museum, Ben Wunderly	Yes
N.C. State Parks, Randy Newman	No
<b><u>Community Members and Community Organizations Members</u></b>	
Perry Barrow	No
John Fussell	Yes
Dr. Dan Rittschof	Yes
Ann Carter	Yes
Margaret Garner	Yes
Robin Newton	Yes
<b><u>Others Present</u></b>	
Paula Gillikin, DCM/NCCR & NCNERR, Central Sites Manager	
Rebecca Ellin, DCM/NCCR & NCNERR, Program Manager	
Tommy Hughes, Wildlife Resources Commission, Coastal Ecoregion Supervisor	
Luke Gruber, Public	
Everette Newton, Public	

**Reserve-wide Administrative Update (Rebecca Ellin via Paula Gillikin)**

- *Staffing News*
  - Elise Gilchrist joined the Reserve team in August as our Communications and Project Management Specialist. Elise has a Bachelor's degree in Animal Behavior. Shortly after graduating, she moved to Thailand and spent two years working as a research assistant for a non-profit organization that studies Asian elephant cognition and promotes wildlife conservation. It was through this experience that she

recognized her passion for science communication. She then held a position at a marine conservation field station in Mexico working as a media and communications specialist.

- Kate (Murray) Jones joined the Reserve in October as our Northern Sites Manager. Kate has a Bachelor's degree in Biology with a minor in Environmental Studies from the College of Charleston and a professional degree in Landscape Architecture from The University of British Columbia. She most recently worked with The Nature Conservancy in natural area management of the Nags Head Woods Preserve and served as the GIS analyst and community engagement coordinator for the NC Coastal Resilience project. Additionally, Kate has landscape design and planning experience in residential and municipal settings and currently serves on the Town of Nags Head's Planning Board.

- *NCNERR Management Plan Update*

Staff are continuing to work on the management plan update for the N.C. National Estuarine Research Reserve. NOAA is reviewing initial draft chapters of the plan as they are completed to ensure that all required elements are included per the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) management plan guidelines; approximately half of the chapters have been reviewed or are under review currently. The Reserve will then seek input on the full initial draft plan from the LACs, N.C. Coastal Resources Commission (CRC), and the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality. NOAA will then review the final draft management plan for content and compliance with the NERRS management plan guidelines. A 30-day public comment period and three public meetings will be held on the final draft management plan prior to the plan's final publication. Staff are planning to review the full initial draft plan with the LACs at their spring 2017 meetings and share the plan and LAC comments on the plan with the CRC at their April 2017 meeting.

- *Budget*

- The Division of Coastal Management received \$619,322 from NOAA for operation of the NCNERR portion of the Coastal Reserve during this fiscal year, up \$24,872 from last year. The additional funds are being used to cover fixed cost increases and to fund a portion of the temporary staffing positions through the annual budget rather than relying on a variety of different funding sources that vary from year to year.
- The Division of Coastal Management's state appropriations were reduced by \$27,173 this fiscal year as required by the Department of Environmental Quality. As a result, the appropriations allocated for the Reserve program were reduced by approximately \$5,000.

- *Periodic Rules Review*

The Coastal Reserve's rules, 07O, are scheduled to be reviewed by the Rules Review Commission in June 2017 as part of the Periodic Review and Expiration of Existing Rules process (G.S. 150B-21.3A). Staff classified each rule citation in 07O as necessary with substantive public interest, necessary without substantive public interest, or unnecessary per G.S. 150B-21.3A (c)(1). Staff then revised the initial draft classification based on input from the LACs and the CRC supported the revised initial draft classification at its July 2016 meeting. The Department of Environmental Quality approved revised initial draft classification and the classification is currently out for public comment through November 21, 2016. As of October 21, 2016, the approximate mid-point of the public comment period, no comments had been received. After the public

comment period closes, staff will compile a report for submittal to the Rules Review Commission that responds to comments received and amends the initial agency determinations if necessary. The LACs will have the opportunity to review the draft report in January 2017 prior to presentation of the report to the CRC at its February 2017 meeting. Any proposed amendments to the rule language received during the public comment period will be considered during the readoption process.

#### **Site Update – Old Business (Paula Gillikin)**

- *Update on Shoreline Change Monitoring*

An update on the Reserve's efforts to craft a plan to monitor shoreline change at the Rachel Carson Reserve was provided. Two shoreline monitoring surveys were conducted during the summer of 2016 by interns using a National Park Service horizontal shoreline monitoring protocol. Also during the summer, Reserve staff and a contractor conducted one survey on foot over 2 days using a high grade GPS (RTK) to collect elevation data. Duke University used an un-manned aerial vehicle with high grade GPS (RTK) at the same time UNC-IMS researchers were measuring elevation along the narrowest portion of Bird Shoal during the summer months. The Reserve's next step is to execute a contract with Duke to provide a before and after picture of elevation at Bird Shoal pre- and post- hurricane Matthew. Rodney Guajardo presented habitat GIS maps of the Bird Shoal area from 1986, 2007, and 2010.

- *Visitor Study*

A visitation study will be wrapped up this fall and data will be used to estimate the total annual number of visitors to the site.

#### **Site Update – New Business (Paula Gillikin)**

- *NOAA-Funded Marine Debris Project*

A marine debris detection and removal project for medium and large items is currently underway at the Rachel Carson Reserve. The project is funded through a competitive award by the NOAA Marine Debris Program. Debris is being mapped by staff at Duke University Marine Robotics Laboratory. The debris maps are then overlaid on the Rachel Carson Reserve habitat map and debris is prioritized for removal. So far, over 10,500 pounds of debris have been removed. Select areas of damaged vegetation will be monitored for recovery.

- *Plan for Addressing Hunting Concerns/Balancing Reserve Uses (Paula Gillikin and Tommy Hughes)*

The committee was reminded about types of hunting complaints that have been received by Reserve staff and most recently by the Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC). Complaints about hunting on Carrot Island include safety concerns; possible illegal baiting of birds; citizens not liking the noise of shooting; and citizens not understanding why hunting is allowed within the boundaries of a reserve. Tommy Hughes from the WRC explained to the committee how a WRC-administered hunting permit program could address many of the hunting concerns by making it possible to control hunting in areas of concern by making hunting opportunities available at particular times, places, and/or limited to a certain number of people. The Reserve will consider participating in the WRC permitted hunting program after further internal discussions and a public meeting in Beaufort where hunters and citizens will have an opportunity to provide input.

- *Reserve-Wide Shellfish Policy*

There are currently two shellfish leases at the Masonboro Island Reserve. In November of 2015, the Reserve recommended to DMF that no further leases be considered within Reserve boundaries through December 2016. This temporary suspension was enacted to give the Reserve time to consider and evaluate how this activity and siting of leases within the boundaries interacts with the various management designations, programs, rules, and policies that affect the Reserve sites. Concerns the Reserve staff have about this activity include: the unknown ecological impacts of leases, particularly the cumulative impact of multiple leases and how these impacts may jeopardize the Reserve sites' ability to serve as "control" research and monitoring sites; and the ability of other traditional users to effectively utilize the sites and the possible impact to the recreational visitor experience. Reserve staff have since been working to develop an internal policy to describe how shellfish lease requests will be evaluated, to outline how the Reserve will work with DMF to site leases to reduce conflicts with other uses and with ecologically sensitive resources, and to determine what thresholds may be appropriate to ensure that the natural, ambient conditions of the sites are not altered and that the research and long-term monitoring purposes of the Reserve are maintained. The Reserve currently anticipates having a final policy completed before the end of the temporary suspension at which time we will begin to review any new proposed leases on a case-by-case basis.

#### **Roundtable Discussion**

- The committee discussed the Reserve's and WRC's authority to control hunting at the site.
- The members of the committee discussed how WRC enforcement presence at the Reserve might be increased if a hunting permit system were implemented.
- The committee generally agreed that increased recreational use and nearby development has led to the vast majority of the hunting complaints. Given that other Reserve uses are not likely to decrease; this is a good time to address the issue.
- The committee suggested that other uses, such as the number of people getting dropped off on the Reserve, might need to be regulated in the future. The Reserve shouldn't stop at only trying to regulate hunting activities.
- The committee is supportive of the Reserve investigating the hunting permit system as a way to balance visitor use and increase safety.
- The Beaufort Police Department is willing to partner with WRC to address hunting concerns.
- The Reserve should consider regulating duck blinds in the future. It was suggested that we do not allow any new duck blinds.
- The committee discussed other sources of data that might add to the shoreline change monitoring effort such as past Duke graduate studies that documented the embayment area behind Bird Shoal.
- Coring data from the maritime ridge at Carrot Island might be useful to understand when it formed and how that shoreline might have changed over time.
- Margaret Garner's graduate work included a sea level rise model that could be used to inform future conditions.
- The committee is generally not supportive of having shellfish aquaculture sited within Reserve boundaries. Comments centered around cutting off land for public use; plastic pollution; and interfering with research.

- Members of the committee would like to know how they can provide input on the Reserve's policy and also with DMF about how shellfish aquaculture operations should be located outside of the boundaries of reserves.
- Members of the committee do not believe that shellfish aquaculture is a traditional commercial fishing activity that is in line with the purposes of the protection of the Reserve.
- Ann Carter suggested that the Town of Beaufort should consider a resolution against shellfish aquaculture at the Rachel Carson Reserve.

#### **Public Comment**

- Everette Newton discussed how duck blinds are a problem at Middle Marsh and cause marine debris. They should be managed in some way.

#### **Actions Items**

- Paula will provide the Reserve-wide update via email since several of the members had to leave the meeting and time was getting short. She will also follow up on how the committee can weigh-in on the Reserve's shellfish policy.